



THE

KNIGHT



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September-October 2008.

LNA MEETS

Saturday morning, August 2, 2008, at 11am seven of us gathered for a general membership meeting of the LNA, in Room 311, Baltimore Convention Center, 1 West Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD during the 117th Annual American Numismatic Association Convention.

Gathered were Vince Alones, charter member and spiritual patriarch of the LNA and lifetime member of the ANA; Aleksandras Radžius, Director of the LNA; Henry Gaidis, expert on Lithuanian military medals and decorations; Andrew Tumonis, professional coin dealer and long time member of the LNA; George (Adomavičius) Adams, former Marine Corps officer and researcher into his Lithuanian roots; Jerzy Popielarz of Monarch Auctions, a Pole and a new member of the LNA; and Alex Fraley, Vince Alones's grandson, currently a university student and hopefully a future LNA member. Andrew Perala of Coin World stopped by prior to the meeting, regretfully he was scheduled for another event at the same time our meeting was being held. Mr. Perala is of Finnish heritage and was most pleased that we knew all about the Winter War between Finland and Russia just prior to WWII.

Laid out on the head table was a collection of numismatic items collected over the past two years from the rural population in the Zarasai region of Lithuania by a university student. The student went through the farms of Zarasai and talked to the residents who lived through the Russian

forced on the Lithuanian people. Many gave the student the Russian banknotes and coins they had used. It is possible that these notes and coins were also handled by Lithuanian partisans during the Lithuanian Partisan War 1944-1956.

Henry Gaidis gave a presentation on the Lithuanian aviators Darius and Girėnas who appear on current Lithuanian coins, banknotes and on a Lithuanian aviation medal. Aleksandras Radžius gave a presentation on the difference in perspectives towards the value of money between modern and medieval peoples and why this difference must be appreciated if errors are to be avoided in the study and evaluation of medieval numismatics. These two papers, with editorial input and supplemental information, will be published in *The Knight* in the order that they were presented at the meeting. Due to spacial limitations, the first paper, that of Henry Gaidis, is published in this issue. The paper of Aleksandras Radžius will be in the next issue.

Darius and Girėnas in Lithuanian Numismatics

Henry L. Gaidis

This year is the 75th anniversary of the trans-Atlantic flight of two Lithuanian-American aviators, Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas. Although the world has greatly changed since those days of daring young men and their flying machines, time has not diminished the glory of Darius and Girėnas's deeds. These two heroic aviators continue to be honored to this day on Lithuanian coins, banknotes and a medal.

After the first successful trans-Atlantic flight by Charles Lindberg on May 20-21, 1927, there was a rush of pilots seeking to duplicate the feat.

Darius and Girėnas wanted to top Lindberg's non-stop flight from New York to Paris by flying non-stop from New

Darius and Girėnas wanted to top Lindberg's non-stop flight from New York to Paris by flying non-stop from New York to Kaunas, Lithuania. In their modified Bellanca J-6 Model CH-3000 aircraft christened 'LITUANICA', they took off from Floyd Bennet Airport on July 15, 1933 at 6:24 am.

Despite difficult weather conditions and not having a radio, they successfully crossed the Atlantic in 37 hours, surpassing Lindberg's feat. They proceeded across Europe. With only 650 kilometers (403 miles) remaining, Lituanica crashed on July 17, 1933 at 0:36 am in a forest near the village of Pszczelnik in the Myslibuz region of contemporary Poland. In 1933 the area was known as Soldin, Prussia, Germany.

Both aviators were killed in the crash. However, their flight was the second successful trans-Atlantic flight and their 6,411 kilometers (3,975 miles) in the air set an aviation distance record. Their bodies were recovered and transported for burial with great ceremony and honor to Kaunas.

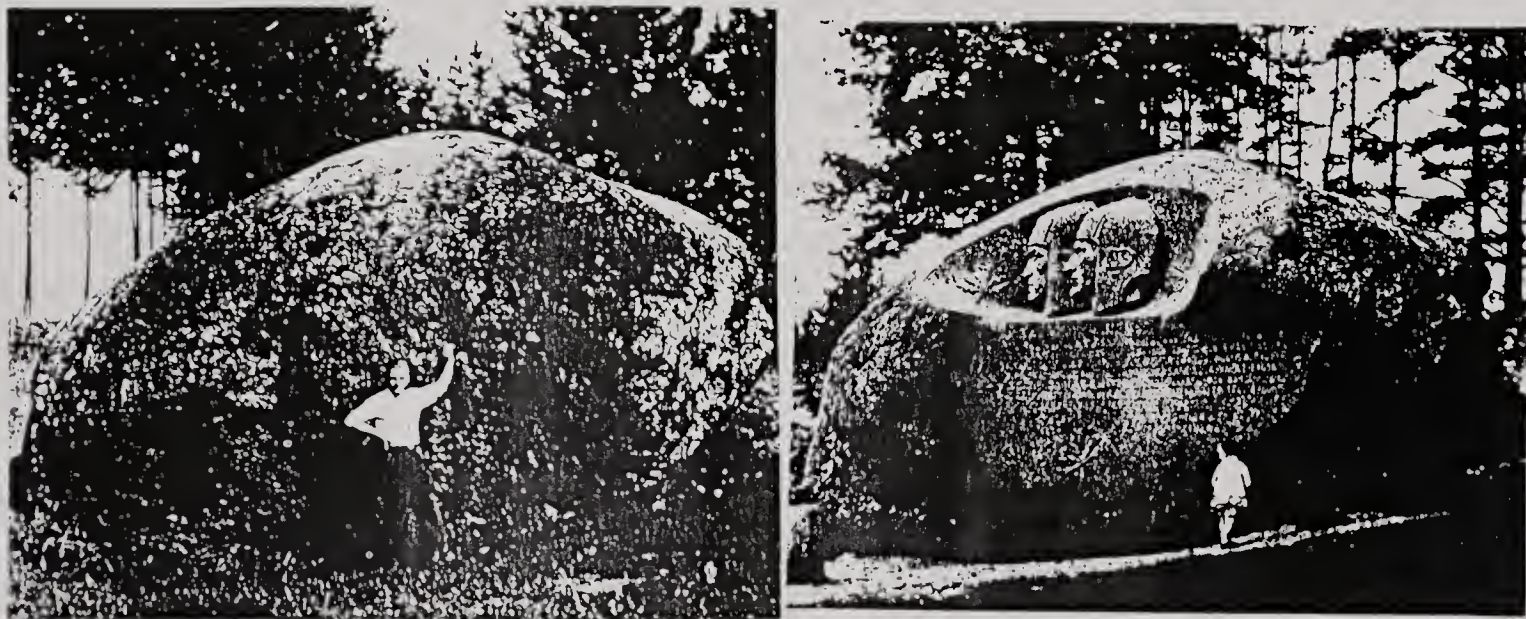
According to the official period Lithuanian and German versions, the crash was caused by a storm and motor failure. However, a member of the official Lithuanian team which investigated the crash site has left a filmed interview where he states that bullet holes were found in the body of the plane as well as the gas tank. Further, at least one rifle bullet was found in the wreckage. This finding was reported to the Lithuanian government, but it chose to suppress this information so as to not damage relations with Germany. We may infer that shots were taken at the orange colored plane and that at least one bullet struck the fuel tank and emptying the fuel tank. By the time all the gas had leaked, it was night. In the pitch darkness of night, even the most skilled attempt to glide down could only have resulted in a crash.

On May 18, 1934, the Government of Lithuania issued two sets of air mail stamps commemorating Darius and Girėnas.



Air mail stamps honoring Darius and Girėnas, issued May 18, 1934.

Subsequently, in 1943, ten years after their tragic death, sculptor Antanas Pundzius carved head profiles of Darius and Girėnas on 'Puntukas', a 256 ton granite rock brought to Lithuania by the last ice age glacier. 'Puntukas' is 6 km from Anykščiai along the road to Kurklius.



'Puntukas' before and after the profiles of Darius and Girėnas were carved on its face in 1943.

Since Lithuania regained its independence, the portraits of Darius and Girėnas have been depicted on the obverses the 10

lity banknotes and their airplane, LITUANICA, flying across the Atlantic on the reverses. First issued in 1991, the design of the 10 lity notes have become more elaborate with each successive issue. However, the portraits of Darius and Girėnas remained on the front and their airplane on the back.



1997 issue 10 lity banknote designed by Giedrius Jonaitis.
Actual size of the note is 135 mm x 65 mm.



In 1993, on the 60th anniversary of Darius and Girėnas's flight, a commemorative 10 lity coin was issued. This was the very first Lithuanian commemorative coin issued after regaining independence. The obverse depicts right profiles of Darius and Girėnas wearing period aviator headgear and goggles on their foreheads, with the dates 1933 and 1993 at the 9 o'clock position. The reverse is the standard reverse of Lithuanian coins depicting the Vytis, denomination of the coin and the word LIETUVA. The coin is 75% copper and 25% nickel, 28.70 mm diameter and weighs 13.15

grams. Along the edge of the coin are the words ŠLOVĖ ATLANTO NUGALĖTOJAMS (Glory to the conquerors of the Atlantic). 10,000 pieces were minted, they were issued in 1993 and distribution was terminated in 1998. Petras Garška was the designer of the coin.



Also in 1993, the Government of Lithuania instituted a medal in honor of Darius and Girėnas to be awarded to persons who have contributed to aviation in Lithuania. This medal was also designed by sculptor Garška and has the same profiles of Darius and Girėnas as on the commemorative 10 litų coin. At the bottom of the obverse are the names DARIUS and GIRĖNAS.

The reverse depicts

LITUANICA flying between the United States and Europe and underneath are UŽ NUOPELNUS LIETUVOS AVIACIJAI, 1933 (FOR ACHIEVEMENTS TO LITHUANIAN AVIATION, 1933). The medals are struck at the Mint of Lithuania in Vilnius.

The ribbon has a wide blue band in the center and, to the edges are, a narrow white band, a wider green band, then a thin white band and last, a thin blue band. The ribbons were initially manufactured by the 'Lithuanian Textile Institute' but are now manufactured by the Danish firm 'Morch & Sons'.

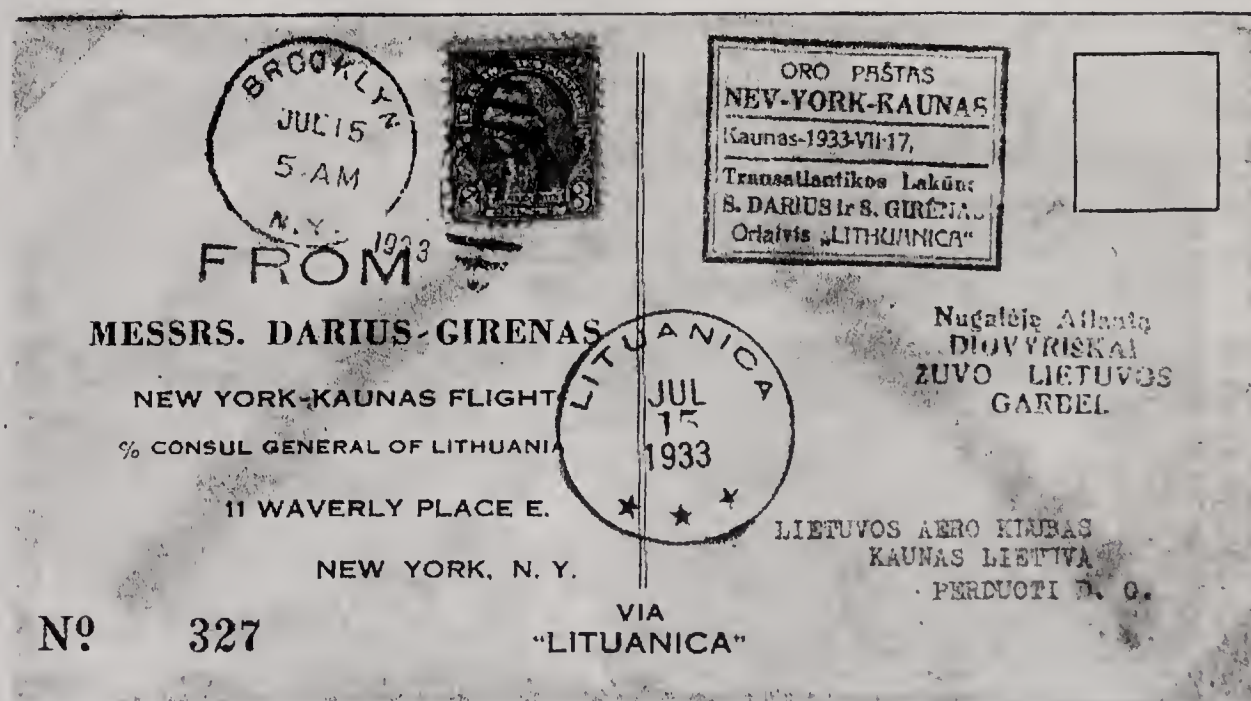
The first recipients of the medal were veterans of the Lithuanian Air Force and civil aviation, among whom was the renowned master stunt pilot Jurgis Kairys. To date, 79 individuals have been awarded the medal.

This past July 14, on the 75th anniversary of their flight, Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania and Juozas Olekas, Minister of National Defence led an official

Lithuanian delegation, to Darius and Girėnas's crash site. The delegation included the Lithuanian Ceremonial Honor Guard and the Lithuanian Air Force Band. The Lithuanian President noted that the date of the pilots' tragic death is also World Lithuanian Unity Day.

The event was hosted by Lech Kaczynski, President of Poland and corresponding high ranking Polish government and military officials. The Polish President Kaczynski's remarks at the event included the statement, "We commemorate the anniversary of the tragic death of the two men who had embarked on a mission impossible, demonstrating their courage and determination in bringing fame to their homeland. They achieved their goal!"

Also present was Skirmantas Mastaras, Steponas Darius's grandson who lives in Kretinga, a town in western Lithuania. To the assembled journalists, Mastaras said, "My heart skips a beat when I stand here (at the crash site). Viewed from today's perspective, the flight shows an enormous love of their homeland."



One of the envelopes recovered from the wreckage of LITUANICA.



Period collage commemorating the flight and tragic death of Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas. Note the Vytis in canton on the Lithuanian flag. This was a relatively rare variation of the Lithuanian flag.



Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas by their airplane LITUANICA.

Today, we here at our LNA meeting, are also paying homage to these two great Lithuanian-American aviators. By knowing their history, we can better appreciate their deeds as well the Lithuanian coins, notes, medals and stamps in our collections with their likenesses!

Lithuanian Commemorative coins from 1993

Every since the restored Republic of Lithuania began issuing commemorative coins in 1993, we published in 'The Knight' all information we had about these coins. And in the past 15 years, many Lithuanian commemorative coins were issued. As a service to our membership, we are featuring a serialized listing of all the Lithuanian commemorative coins issued to date.



60th anniversary of the trans-Atlantic flight of Darius and Girėnas

Edge: ŠLOVĖ ATLANTO NUGALĖTOJAMS
(HONOR TO THE CONQUERORS OF THE ATLANTIC)

Designed by Petras Garška

75% copper, 25% nickel alloy

Diameter: 28.70 mm

Weight: 13.15 grams

Denomination: 10 litu

Issued: 1993

Mintage: 10,000

Distributed until: 1998

Distributed: 4,500



Visit of Pope John Paul II to Lithuania

Edge: TIKĖJIMAS MEILĖ VILTIS
(FAITH LOVE HOPE)

Designed by Leonas Pivoriūnas and
Petras Garška

75% copper, 25% nickel alloy

Diameter: 28.70 mm

Weight: 13.15 grams

Denomination: 10 litu

Issued: 1993

Mintage: 10,000

Distributed until: 1998

Distributed: 5,000

(continued in the next issue of 'The Knight')



**LIETUVOS BANKAS
BANK OF LITHUANIA
CASH DEPARTMENT**



To whom it may concern

RE: NUMISMATIC ITEMS

27 June 2008 No. 10.48.-1002-2084

We hereby inform you that on the basis of the decision of the Board of the Bank of Lithuania, a new 50 litas commemorative coin issued for participation in the silver coin programme "Europe. European Cultural Heritage" will be launched on 30 June 2008.

The 50 litas coin is made of silver (Ag 925), quality proof, diameter 38.61 mm, weight 28.28 g. The coin has a mirror surface with a mat relief. The mintage of the coin is 10,000 pieces.

The front and back of the coin bear monuments of Lithuania's cross crafting and its symbolism, included by UNESCO in the List of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2001.

The front of the coin also features the symbol of the State Emblem, Vytis. Around it, the inscriptions LIETUVA, 2008 and 50 LITU are laid out; at the bottom there is the mark of UAB Lithuanian Mint. The central part of the back of the coin bears a latent image: the logo of the coin programme – a stylised elliptical composition of the symbol of the euro, € and a star from the flag of the European Union, as well as a picture of one of the symbols of cross crafting. Around are the inscriptions KRYŽDIRBYSTĖ IR KRYŽIŲ SIMBOLIKA (*CROSS CRAFTING AND CROSS SYMBOLISM*) * UNESCO.

The edge of the coin bears the inscription LIETUVOS BANKAS.

The coin was designed by Rytas Jonas Belevičius.

The coins were minted at the Lithuanian Mint.

The price of the 50 litas coin is LTL 150 (EUR 43.45) (in a display box) and LTL 130 (EUR 37.66) (without a box), including VAT.

Please also be advised that sets of numismatic circulation coins of 2008 issue can be acquired in the cash offices of the Bank of Lithuania. The price for one set is LTL 25 (EUR 7.25), including VAT.

Illustrations are attached. Leaflets with the descriptions of the coin and the coinset are enclosed in a separate envelope.

For further information, please refer to the website of the Bank of Lithuania at www.lb.lt.

Yours faithfully,
/signed/
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